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ABSTRACT

This essay provides an historical perspective on conflict and discusses the relationship of prejudice and ethnocentrism to intergroup conflict, prejudice and conflict resolution in childhood, as well as approaches to conflict resolution in society. History is full of hateful and destructive indulgences based on religious, racial, and other prejudices. Intergroup behavior research shows that human beings have an extraordinary tendency to distinguish between "good" and "bad" people, between ingroups and outgroups. This sorting tendency is widespread and readily learned. Almost any sort of interaction within a group tends to promote ingroup favoritism. Efforts to make sure that young people do not acquire orientations of ethnocentrism and prejudice and become susceptible to violent solutions include providing conditions for the development of early self-esteem and for intimate and enduring interpersonal relationships. Clear guidelines for behavior should be established and coping strategies taught. In trying to resolve conflicts, we should think of ourselves as a single, interdependent species living on spaceship earth. Conflict prevention or resolution must be given a higher priority on the world's agenda. (RM)

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Prejudice, ethnocentrism, and violence in an age of high technology

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Prejudice, ethnocentrism, and violence in an age of high technology

In a brief moment of evolutionary time—since the industrial revolution and mainly in the 20th century—we humans have thrust ourselves headlong into a world of enormous complexity, vast scale, unprecedented rates of change, technical and social transformation, brilliant new horizons, and weaponry of destructive power beyond previous imagination. Our power for better and worse suddenly dwarfs everything that went before in millions of years of human evolution. This power is rich in promise for the human future if we can at last come to master the pervasive tendency toward conflict in our species.

The capacity for attachment and the capacity for violence seem to be fundamentally connected in human beings. We fight with other people in the belief that we are protecting ourselves, our loved ones, and the group with which we identify most strongly; altruism and aggression are thus intimately linked in war and other human conflicts.

The underlying orientation of importance here is the ubiquitous human tendency toward egocentrism and ethnocentrism. We find it easy to put ourselves at the center of the universe, attaching a strong positive value to ourselves and our group, while attaching a negative value to many other people and their groups. It is prudent to assume that human beings are all, to some extent, egocentric and ethnocentric. But these tendencies, under certain conditions, can lead to violent conflict.

The world is now, as it has been for a long time, awash in a sea of ethnocentrism, prejudice, and violent conflict. The worldwide historical record is full of hateful and destructive indulgences based on religious, racial, and other distinctions. What is new is the destructive power of our weaponry: nuclear, enhanced conventional,

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chemical, and biological. Moreover, the worldwide spread of technical capability, the miniaturization of weapons, the widely broadcast justifications for violence, and the upsurge of fanatical behavior are occurring in ways that can readily provide the stuff of very deadly conflicts in every nook and cranny of the earth. To be blunt, we have as a species a rapidly growing capacity to make life everywhere absolutely miserable. As if that were not enough, two nations probably have the capacity to make human life extinct.

No longer have we the luxury to indulge in prejudice and in ethnocentric extremes. These are anachronisms grounded in our ancient past. There may be "tough-minded" people who believe that this is the human condition and that we must make the most of it. But technology has passed them by. The destructive capacity of modern weapons — large and small, nuclear and non-nuclear — has made the "tough-minded" view unrealistic, if not today, then tomorrow. If we cannot learn to accommodate each other respectfully — within nations and across nations — we will destroy each other at such a rate that humanity will soon have little to cherish, assuming there is any humanity left on earth.

An evolutionary and historical perspective

Several million years ago, our ancestors lived in small, intimate groups with only the simplest tools to help them adapt for survival. They had to cope with profound dangers, periodic jeopardy to essential food and water supply, predators, variable climate, and many other vicissitudes of nature that were far beyond their control. They had to rely not only on their wits and tools but above all on their solidarity, cooperation, joint action, and mutual support in the face of nature's hard blows. Even so, their vulnerability was great and their casualties were heavy. At the time agriculture was invented about 10,000 years ago, there were probably more baboons on earth than people. So recently as that, human life was very precarious. Agriculture, as it came to be gradually implemented worldwide in the past few thousand years, succeeded in diminishing that vulnerability. But the most drastic change in the long history of our species — essentially the acceleration of technical advance and its application to human problems of adaptation — occurred only about two centuries ago, with the onset of the industrial revolution.

What a change a century can make! Human initiative has transformed the world in the 20th century. An ordinary citizen of the most technically advanced countries has opportunities and protections not available to kings in earlier centuries. In recent decades, largely in the second half of the 20th century, science has been institutionalized on a vast scale for the first time, and the acquisition of deep knowledge of the structure of matter, life, the nature of the universe, the human environment, and even of ourselves has accelerated sharply. These scientific advances have provided an unprecedented basis for technological innovation in computers, telecommunications, biotechnology — and, of course, weaponry. The potential benefits of modern technology for human well-being are profound in every sphere, in food, water, health, communication, transportation, energy, and human understanding.

The transformations in science and technology could mean the virtual elimination of human impoverishment in the next several decades. For this to happen, however, human beings will have to reckon with their own nature, particularly the tendencies toward prejudice, ethnocentrism, and violent aggression.

Technology, as we know, can increase suffering as well as relieve it. Everywhere, the powerful have been those who have had the technical skills and advanced knowledge. They have been able, if they wished, to turn their power against fellow humans who are weak, vulnerable, or perceived to be menacing to them. The temptation to use power in this way has proved almost irresistible.

Centuries ago, it was common for military conquerors to put captives to the sword or to reduce them to slavery. By the end of the 19th century, it was widely believed that our species had achieved a sufficiently civilized status to make such horrors impossible. Yet the world since then has seen the near-extirpation of the Australian aborigines and the North American Indians. The 20th century had scarcely begun when, under cover of World War I, the Armenians living under the Turkish yoke suffered massacres and deportations that destroyed over one-and-a-half-million men, women, and children and scattered the survivors from their ancient homeland to the far corners of the globe. The century was four decades old when the leaders of a nation that had been considered highly civilized initiated a systematic destruction of the Jews in German-controlled lands, at the cost of six million lives. The world learned, and is continuing to learn, how great the horrors can be when supposedly civilized nations set about destroying depreciated people.

Human slaughter in recent decades has occurred all over the world — from Burundi to Cambodia to Guatemala to Indonesia to Northern Ireland to the Soviet Union. No continent is exempt, no people too civilized, no nation beyond susceptibility to this societal disease. Where will it happen tomorrow?

The holocaust vividly demonstrated the human capacity to do immense harm "justified" with explanations that appeal to the most disturbed emotions. As has so often happened in human history, an outgroup was presented as the cause of virtually all social ills and personal frustrations. The destruction of the powerless was made palatable to the powerful.

But now there is more. The Nazis brought to their gruesome tasks a level of sophistication in modern organization and technology that exceeded prior attempts at mass destruction. The world has moved since the 1940s to still more complex levels of organization and technology. Unfortunately, there is little to suggest that we have learned how to avoid the use of these tools for mass destruction.

These sophisticated technologies are now in the employ of state, group, and individual terrorism. To threaten, injure, or kill innocent bystanders in a circumstance of political, religious, or ideological conflict is an ancient form of human behavior. But in the 20th century such behavior is abetted by an array of technologies that dwarf all previous reality. From the employment of instant worldwide televised threats to diverse miniaturized weapons of devastation, the old terrorism is rapidly becoming transformed.

Small-scale terrorist episodes may not seem to present a formidable capability to

wreak havoc. But they do. If they continue to spread, aided by more powerful weapons and more publicity, they have the potential eventually not only of injuring a great many innocent victims but also of arousing repressive responses by powerful governments in democratic societies as well as totalitarian ones. Moreover, terrorism tends to trigger long-term cycles of retaliation and escalation. Killing can become a way of life and hatred an organizing principle for communities. But that path offers no authentic prospect of a decent future.

The human propensities toward prejudice, ethnocentrism, and violence have other manifestations. Skin color has long provided a lightning rod for prejudice. The industrial revolution occurred in the northern hemisphere—a fact that was to have profound repercussions over the ensuing two centuries. Light-skinned people in Europe developed powerful weapons and tools before dark-skinned people elsewhere. From that time to the present, there has been a tendency for light-skinned people not only to become more technically advanced and affluent, but also to depreciate, exploit, and even subjugate their dark-skinned brethren. This is one of the most serious problems in the modern world, a root cause of human impoverishment and a dilemma that has reached crisis proportions in South Africa.

Another manifestation is the grotesque and pervasive violation of human rights, often involving overt mental and physical torture. The tragic fact is that a large percentage of the world's people live in nations that condone or foster the violation of human rights—not only in such visible cases as South Africa and the Soviet Union, but in many other countries. We are becoming accustomed to this violation. What is today's shock becomes tomorrow's routine—the banality of evil indeed. Even members of the most humanitarian professions may be seductively drawn into this banality.

These observations are not meant to be alarmist but to provide an antidote to complacency and a stimulus to scientists, scholars, policymakers, and indeed all of us who care about the future of humanity, to learn how to marshal the forces of human organization and technology that have been developed over the past century to improve communication and understanding, to foster social justice, and to resolve conflicts fairly.

Relationship of prejudice and ethnocentrism to violence and intergroup conflict

In a world so full of hatred, repression, terrorism, small wars, and preparation for immense wars, human conflict is a subject that deserves the most careful and objective inquiry. The stakes are now so high that there is a great need for cooperative engagement with these problems over a wide range of inquiry involving the physical, biological, behavioral, and social sciences. There is no royal road to truth, no single perspective that offers overriding promise. Just as the sources and manifestations of human conflict are immensely varied, so too are there many useful approaches to understanding, preventing, and resolving conflict.

Conflict and its prevention or resolution have not been major subjects for scholarly inquiry until quite recently, and even now they attract only marginal interest

in the world's great academic institutions. The status accorded such study has been low, support has been minimal, and the institutional arrangements usually inadequate. Each year a few books and articles appear that constitute a serious effort to present new findings or to synthesize existing information and ideas. But the number of scientists and scholars heavily engaged in such inquiry is a fraction of the larger community and is not adequate to the scope of the worldwide problems.

Nevertheless, some interesting and useful work is being done, including most importantly: 1) detailed, systematic inquiry into the origin and resolution of past conflicts and ongoing study of contemporary conflicts; 2) formulation of fundamental concepts pertinent to a wide range of conflicts; 3) experimental research on simulated conflicts; 4) the study of negotiations, both in real-life circumstances and in simulated ones; 5) the study of various intergroup and international institutions as they affect conflict; 6) research specifically focusing on issues of war and peace; and 7) the study of conflicts at various levels of organization, such as families, communities, and nations, in the search for common factors and principles, so that discoveries at one level may illuminate issues at another level.

During the past decade, one of the most fruitful perspectives has come from experimental and field research on intergroup behavior. The flow of evidence is impressive and bears on an issue of great practical importance—the extraordinary tendency of human beings to distinguish between “good” and “bad” people, between heroes and villains, between ingroups and outgroups. This sorting tendency is widespread and readily learned. People accept favorable evaluations of the products and performances of their ingroup and accept unfavorable characterizations of other groups that go far beyond the objective evidence or the requirements of the situation. This is true not only of long-standing group commitments but even in experimental situations where only a brief orientation given the participants enables them to distinguish a newly formed group from another group in the experiment. Almost any sort of interaction within a group tends to promote ingroup favoritism. Actually, it seems rather difficult to avoid this effect even if one wants to do so.

Enduring hostility between groups is likely to arise when the groups perceive a conflict of fundamental interests, a depreciating difference in status, or a difference of beliefs that jeopardizes self-esteem. Perceived threats from the outgroup tend to enhance group solidarity, tightness of group boundaries, and punishment of those who appear to deviate from adherence.

A common way that groups under stress respond is by blaming difficulties on other groups. The strange groups, not well known and understood largely in stereotypes, are an inviting target of animosity. Justification for harming outgroup members is readily provided by making assumptions about the damage *they* would do to the ingroup; the damage *they* would inadvertently do to themselves; and by classifying *them* as essentially nonhuman.

All these considerations apply to intergroup conflict within a society and to conflict between societies. Though the content of such intergroup hostility varies widely from time to time and from place to place, the form of the antagonism is remarkably similar.

Such a group-centered view of life has been extensively studied under the concept of "ethnocentrism." (Perhaps "groupcentrism" would be a more appropriate term, since these behavior patterns are certainly not limited to ethnic groups.) Ethnocentrism may be thought of in parallel with "egocentrism" as an orientation in which values derived from one's own background are applied to other people, however different their values and background might be. The most dangerous form of ethnocentrism is an orientation that regards the attributes of other cultures as deeply inferior, immoral, or even subhuman. Symbols of one's own group and its values become objects of respect and pride; symbols of other groups contrast sharply, often in terms of depreciation or contempt.

Throughout history, ingroup versus outgroup distinctions have been made with respect to religion, language, ethnicity, region, tribe, nations, and political entities; and ethnocentric attitudes and ideologies have been elaborated to justify hostile and depreciatory policies toward these diverse human groupings.

The idea that there is a human biological predisposition to destructive aggression has been of interest for centuries and is controversial today. The current debates have a saint-versus-sinner cast, often oversimplifying a complex subject that is badly in need of more and better scientific inquiry. Clearly, the human species is capable of remarkable cooperation, mutual ties, loyalty, and compassion as well as hatred, cruelty, violence, and destruction. But whether human groups can ever achieve internal cohesion without harsh depreciation of other groups is the issue. What is needed is wide-ranging, careful, systematic research on the factors that exacerbate or mitigate ethnocentrism. Concomitantly, there is a need for deeper understanding of the conditions under which various aggression-related behavior patterns are likely to occur and of the conditions under which various conflicts can be effectively resolved.

Prejudice and conflict resolution in childhood

How do we acquire orientations of ethnocentrism, prejudice, dogmatism, and a susceptibility to violent "solutions"? Are there ways to foster more constructive orientations as we gain better understanding of the factors governing the development of behavior? The nature of parental care, experience with siblings and with peers, exposure to hatred and violence in schools and mass media, the cumulative effect of frustrating conditions, and previous experience in situations involving aggression are all important factors. So, also, in some countries, are official propaganda and the religious cultivation of stereotypes.

Prejudice — or the prejudgment of persons or situations — is to some degree a universal phenomenon. It is based in part on inherent processes of cognitive development. Children begin to order their environment by means of their developing capacity to form categories. This process allows for rapid evaluation of the environment in order to determine what is familiar and unfamiliar, so that the child can make a prompt response to changing situations.

But no one is born prejudiced. Modeling, learning, and socialization build on the basic tendency to categorize and evaluate people, groups, and situations. Prej-

udice is a response to the environment. It reflects the individual's psychological needs, including the need for group affiliation and for adherence to cultural and subcultural norms. The process by which affiliation to the ingroup and prejudice against the outgroup is formed is fundamentally similar whether the prejudice involves race, class, sex, religion, or nationality. The extent of prejudice can be affected by home, school, and community factors as well as by the opportunities to gain familiarity with other groups under constructive circumstances.

Recurrent major frustration is conducive to the formation of strong prejudices and to an orientation toward harmful ethnocentrism. Frustrations — disappointments, obstacles, disruptions of deep attachment — are inevitable in human life and social conditions may ease or aggravate both the sources of such frustration and the opportunities for coping with those that occur. In general, major frustrations of basic drives and needs tend to elicit aggressive responses: irritability, a readiness to blame others, a mood to strike out at putative obstacles, a proneness to identify vulnerable scapegoats against whom some sort of retaliation can be mounted.

What frustrations are most powerful in eliciting severe aggressiveness? One is frustration of self-esteem or a sense of personal worth. In human history, where one has had to have a place in the organized group in order to survive, respect from others has become essential to the sense of self-esteem, and behavior directed toward the establishment and maintenance of self-esteem, dignity, and self-worth has great cross-cultural generality.

Frustrations in crucial interpersonal relations are also of great importance in fostering individual aggression. The primary relationships within the group have been highly significant in the evolution of our species and have much to do with development of a sense of security in early life and a strong base from which exploration of the personal environment can proceed.

Closely related is frustration of one's sense of belonging to the larger group beyond the intimate few — a group with which one closely identifies and which makes an important contribution to one's self-esteem, whether that entity is a subculture, an ethnic group, a nation, a tribe, a political entity, or an occupational unit.

These frustrations of deep drives and needs, then, significantly raise the probability of aggressive behavior.

But such threats may also elicit nonhateful, nonviolent forms of coping — and usually do. Hostile responses are not the only way to cope with recurrent major frustration. A serious frustration may lead to passivity or, more positively, to assertive behavior, personal initiative, and vigorous and persistent efforts toward problem-solving that may be aggressive in some sense but not hateful or destructive. Such nondestructive, persistent efforts at problem-solving may be more difficult, complicated, and tedious in the short run, but they are much more rewarding in the long run and perhaps even essential for our survival as a species.

The modern world for all its opportunities, benefits, and promises for a brighter future is full of circumstances that build major frustrations into childhood and adolescence. What will give a young person a sense of personal worth that is not

based on destructive orientations?

One illustrative problem area is male adolescence. For many thousands of years, self-esteem in young males was probably based to a considerable extent on competence in hunting and warlike activities. In the future, however, alternatives to warlike activities as sources of youthful self-esteem must be found. It is essential to reduce the susceptibility of young males to hatred and violence by providing them with opportunities for engrossing activity, initiative-taking, and accomplishment.

But there are serious obstacles to the development of such alternatives in contemporary society. Although constructive and socially valued work offers a vital source of self-esteem and a sense of belonging, in many countries economic conditions combined with an assortment of ethnic prejudices have produced high unemployment among youth, especially among members of minority groups. Additionally, the increase of technological and social complexity in recent times has led to a prolongation of youth. Youth is now a long period following puberty when one is biologically but not yet socially mature. This situation leaves many young people feeling uncertain, confused, and largely incompetent. These are psychological conditions that predispose them to hostility and to the search for a person or group to blame. It is not difficult to see how circumstances can increase the susceptibility of youth to ingroup-outgroup stereotypes.

The behavioral sciences have only just begun to delineate the strategies of coping and problem-solving in the emotionally charged relationships involving young people and the crucial intimate few and highly valued groups. But there appear to be several fundamental orientations that contemporary institutions — the family, the schools, the culture at large — would do well to encourage in the young in the search for ways to avert the ravages of hatred and violence.

A first step is to provide conditions for the development of early self-esteem. A second is to provide conditions for intimate and enduring interpersonal relationships. A third is to establish clear guidelines for behavior. (In earlier times the guidelines for behavior were much clearer than they are now in most societies, particularly in traditional societies undergoing a transition to modern society.) A fourth is to teach the young to internalize norms of behavior that restrain violence and provide them with strategies that foster preference for, and knowledge of, other modes of coping and problem-solving. (Early security in itself is important, but not sufficient.) A fifth is to develop in the young an image of the future, incorporating goals, expectations, and a sense of purpose or mission that offer some hope that nonhateful, nonviolent means for achieving valued ends can in fact be effective. A sixth, along with respect for one's own self and one's own groups, is to encourage in the young interest in and respect for other groups.

There is a growing research literature on the effectiveness of various school- and community-based efforts to overcome prejudice. Education in all its forms, from family to schools to mass media, can increasingly convey the facts of a pluralistic, crowded, interdependent, and fascinating world, not one that is strange and hateful.

The media, especially television, are of special importance in this regard, and the few studies that are available are provocative. Evidence shows that children and adolescents learn much about other groups by watching television. Unfortu-

nately, much of what they learn is about violence. It is not feasible here to review the formidable evidence relating televised violence to the propensity of children to behave violently in play and probably in real life as well. But violence is vividly presented as an effective way of solving problems: The source of difficulty is removed in a way that may be attractive because it evokes bravery or boldness or skill.

Nevertheless, some research suggests that television need not be a school for violence. Television can portray human diversity sympathetically while highlighting shared human experience. The constructive use of this powerful tool to promote compassionate understanding, nonviolent problem-solving, and decent intergroup relations needs to be pursued. It will not in itself be adequate to overcome inclinations toward hatred and violence. But it can help.

Approaches to conflict resolution in society

If we look worldwide at prejudice, ethnocentrism, and violence in an age of high technology, are there general clues to conflict resolution?

One possibility is for us to come to think of ourselves as a single, interdependent species and to accomplish this in a way that respects diversity. Recall the photograph of tiny earth seen from the moon — surely one of the most valuable contributions of the space program. This perspective of our modest habitat should be an antidote to ethnocentrism.

The extended family could provide a model for the human family in a larger sense. Such large-scale identification presents a very difficult challenge, however, because our species evolved under conditions in which only a small number of people were highly significant for each individual. How, then, can we broaden that perspective to take seriously the well-being of a great many individuals spread through a global community?

Superordinate goals can provide a powerful stimulus for conflict resolution. A superordinate goal is one that is equally important to adversarial groups, yet one that can only be obtained through their joint effort. What might constitute a compelling goal for large groups of people organized over vast distances in mutually suspicious societies? The clear and present danger to survival inherent in nuclear war provides one such goal today. That predicament makes it clear that we must work together if we are to avoid unimaginable disaster.

The existence of multiple loyalties, rather than single-minded loyalty to one group only, also makes it possible to link people of very different groups together. Leaders who have overlapping loyalties can become effective "bridging" persons in times of stress and conflict. International organizations can function similarly — not only governmental organizations but professional and scientific societies, commercial organizations, and cross-cultural groups. Such organizations can promote empathic personal contact and so diminish stereotypes. Perhaps in the long run, on a large scale, such overlapping loyalties can become strong enough to exert a restraining influence on international hostilities.

Overlapping loyalties that cut across traditional ingroup-outgroup antagonisms

are particularly useful. Studies of community conflict have revealed the problem-solving potential of intermediary associations through which opinions may be expressed, the common humanity of the adversaries kept in mind on both sides, and plausible compromises gradually formulated. Perhaps this tells us something about the future role of neutral countries and novel institutions in international conflict resolution.

Mechanisms of conflict resolution in any sphere should be examined for their implications in other spheres. It may well be that understanding of the processes of conflict resolution between groups *within* a nation will in due course enhance our ability to reduce conflict *between* nations.

Organized, visible, skilled conflict resolution services are greatly needed with respect to the whole range of intergroup conflicts. Indeed, it appears that high-level professions are emerging in some countries that emphasize competence in fair, objective, agreed-upon procedures for resolving disputes. A considerable body of relevant experience has arisen, for example, in labor/management relations.

Useful steps have been made toward an understanding of negotiation processes and outcomes that could be of value in dealing with major conflicts. The main points of consensus arising from observational studies of negotiating processes (to some extent confirmed by experimental studies) include these:

- Emphasizing formulations of mutual victory ("win-win");
- Recognizing the compelling nature of basic needs on both sides of the conflict;
- Being firm about vital interests and yet cautious about pursuing tough and unyielding strategies;
- Minimizing threats;
- Avoiding harsh depreciation and unnecessary provocation;
- Taking account of new facts and changing circumstances as negotiations evolve.

The strengthening of both experimental and observational research, keeping in mind actual conflicts and real-world decision makers, could probably lead to major contributions in the next decade. Television and other telecommunications technologies also offer enormous possibilities with respect to human conflict and its resolution. Of all the technological advances of the 20th century, the emerging telecommunications revolution is one of the most important for the future of our species. This technology provides instantaneous international networks with high emotional impact. It can link groups, different cultures, indeed the entire planet, as never before. By the end of the 20th century there will probably be worldwide, jam-proof television. Its potential for diminishing prejudice and ethnocentrism and for reducing intergroup conflict is unprecedented.

Education, broadly speaking, can convey everywhere a clear image of a single species, a huge family including many cousins, more similar than different, searching for decent life chances in many ways, necessarily relying for survival on the give-and-take learned in childhood, but extending far and beyond childhood games. In all our diversity, and carrying all the ancient baggage of readiness to learn prejudice, we must somehow find mutual accommodations. This is a basic theme of human existence, now involving higher stakes than ever before.

Even though ingroup-outgroup distinctions appear to be ubiquitous in human

societies, easy to learn and hard to forget (and probably in some degree a legacy of our evolutionary and historical record in which such distinctions were related to group membership, a sense of belonging, human attachment, and survival itself), even with all that, there is certainly the possibility that we can learn to minimize these invidious distinctions. This may be one of the crucial roads we have to travel in dealing with conflict resolution in the world of the future. We will have to try much more than mankind has ever tried before to enlarge our social identifications in light of common characteristics and superordinate goals. We must find a basis for fundamental human identification across a diversity of cultures in the face of manifest conflict. We *are* a single, interdependent, meaningfully attached, world-wide species.

To speak this truth, however, is not to have assimilated it as a psychological reality. The task of assimilation is daunting. But we can no longer afford to avoid it.

Summary and conclusion

It is extremely important that the tendency to generate intergroup conflicts—once perhaps adaptive but now exceedingly dangerous—be widely understood now. Reluctantly, until it is proved otherwise, we had better assume that the human species is a potentially violent animal organized into potentially violent societies. For practical purposes, it is unwise to follow the widespread, traditional practice of attributing malevolence primarily or solely to other groups. Rather, it is useful to make the assumption that our own group as well as others has malevolent tendencies along with benevolent ones.

Despite the immense, and ultimate, significance of the problems of prejudice, ethnocentrism, and conflict, these subjects are still pretty low on the world's agenda—in science, in the media, in the business community, in the churches, and in governments. The powerful sectors of society everywhere tend to be complacent about such matters and to see them fuzzily as someone else's problems far away. Avoidance and denial tend to substitute for careful scrutiny; authority substitutes for evidence; blaming substitutes for problem-solving. The capacity for wishful thinking in these matters is enormous, as is the capacity for self-justification. But the issue must be faced now in a way that it has never been before.

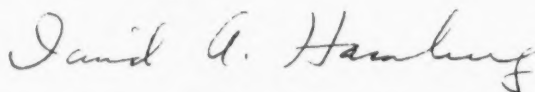
It is certainly not beyond human ingenuity to move this subject higher on the world's agenda. For instance, strong organizations covering wide sectors of science, technology, and education can take an increasingly active role in coping with this critical issue. The scientists and educators, through their most dynamic organizations, can use their formidable influence to strengthen research and education on child development and the growth of prejudice and ethnocentrism and on conflict resolution. They can explore vigorously the application of such knowledge to urgent problems in contemporary society. Attitudes, emotions, beliefs, and political ideologies from our past will often hinder such efforts to enhance our understanding and even impede the utilization of scientific knowledge when it is available, but our motivation for survival is strong, our problem-solving capacities

are great, and the time is not yet too late.

The scientific community is the closest approximation we now have to a truly international community, sharing certain fundamental interests, values, and standards as well as certain fundamental curiosities about the nature of matter, life, behavior, and the universe. The shared quest for understanding is one which knows no national boundaries, no inherent prejudices, no necessary ethnocentrism, and no barriers to the free play of information and ideas. To some extent, the scientific community can provide a model for human relations that might transcend some of the barriers that have plagued the species for so long and have very recently become so dangerous. I do not intend to idealize the scientific community; I am referring here to a set of widely shared aspirations toward which scientists strive—and never quite reach. In a fundamental way, the modern world is the creation of science and technology in all of its aspects—those we relish and those we fear. Can science and technology help us out of the present predicament?

Each person can do something useful to address these issues, first as individuals, second by working in all manner of strong organizations or institutions that should be addressing this problem: schools, colleges, and universities; corporations; units of government; community organizations; churches; unions; professional and scientific societies; foundations; and many others. Each of us can ask questions of practical importance: How can my organization or institution be strengthened to cope with prejudice, ethnocentrism, and hatred in a high-risk world? What can I do personally and professionally to make a difference?

It is high time that people everywhere seriously address the ubiquity of prejudice, the profound and pervasive impact of ethnocentrism, and the greatly enhanced risks of these ancient orientations in the rapidly changing world of the late 20th century. Only by so doing can we begin to mobilize the unprecedented strengths needed to foster for the first time a truly common humanity in which decent human relations prevail.



President

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